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*On*

**TRACK**

An Overview of  
**Employee  
Assistance  
Programs**



Addiction  
Research  
Foundation

Fondation  
de la recherche  
sur la toxicomanie



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# Contents



**2**

Introduction

**5**

On Your Mark

**9**

Get Set

**15**

Go

**21**

Keep Going

**23**

Conclusion and Best Advice



# Introduction



An Employee Assistance Program, or EAP for short, offers confidential professional help to employees who have problems that may impact on their job performance — problems with drugs and alcohol, with family and relationships, with work-related stress, with finances, with anything that may cause personal distress.

EAPs are based on the belief that most problems can be resolved if the employee is willing to seek help, and if appropriate help is available through a workplace program.

With an EAP, everybody wins.


Employees and their families have access to confidential counselling and referrals, to help them resolve their problems.

Employers can benefit from improved productivity, reduced absenteeism and a healthier work environment. In fact, an EAP will help a workplace hold on to valuable employees and avoid the costs of turnover and replacement.

And, with an EAP, the responsibility for dealing with problems affecting an employee's personal life is not

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placed with the supervisor, but shared by the employee and an appropriate professional caregiver, where it belongs.

As well, EAPs can foster goodwill between management and employees.

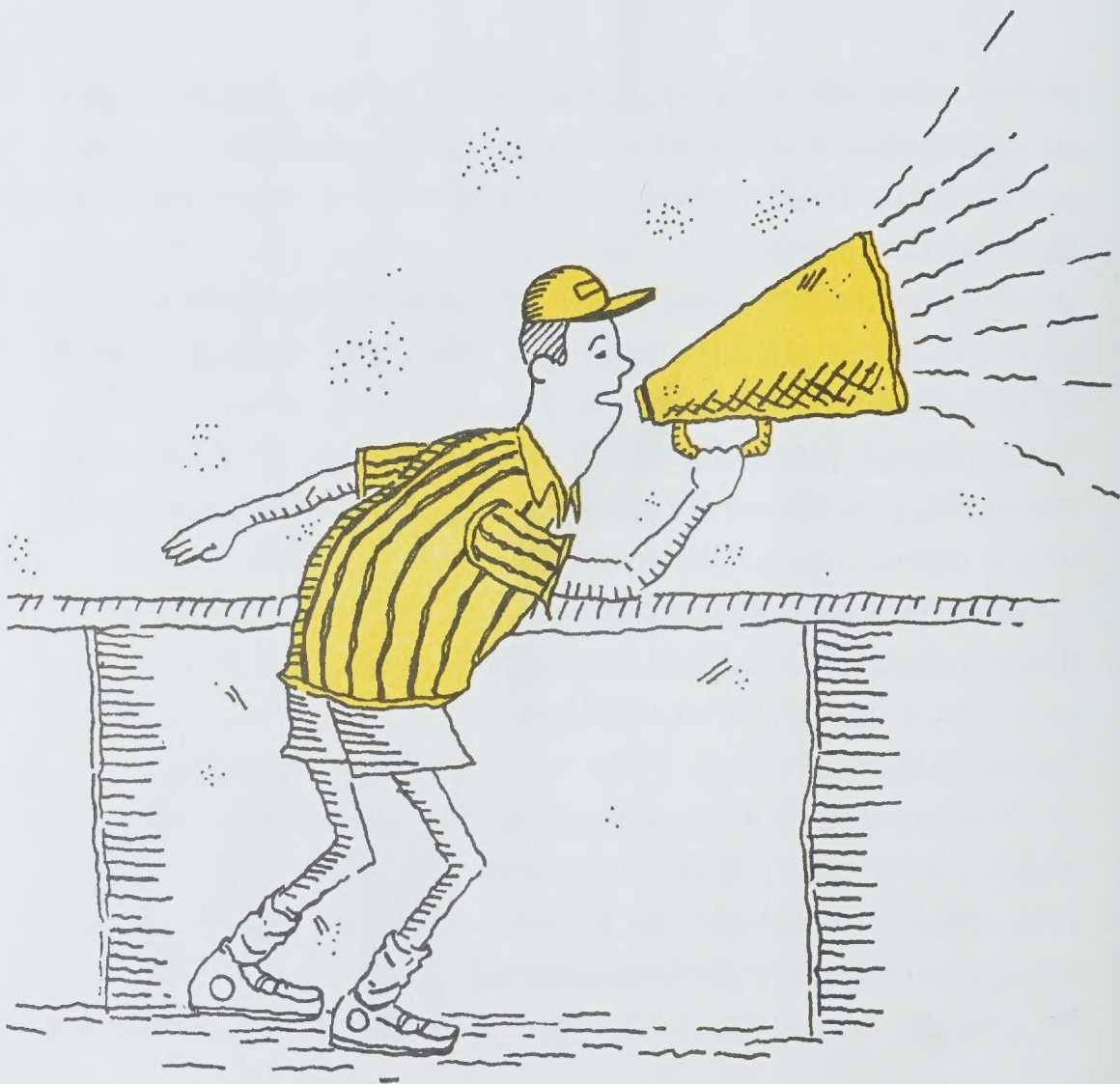
By supporting your EAP development, management shows concern for its employees and a willingness to help those in trouble.

Likewise, labor shows its concern for the health, safety and quality of life of its members. EAPs complement traditional union support for members.

The Addiction Research Foundation has offered advice and assistance on EAPs to worksites for more than 25 years.

This quick reference guide shows how your worksite can take the “On Track” to developing an Employee Assistance Program.





# On Your Mark

## Prepare

### 1. Obtain OK or Formal Approval

Although there are several different models of “program ownership,” the Addiction Research Foundation recommends the *Joint Employer/Employee Model* for your EAP. That’s because programs work best when both employees and management are involved.

Employees won’t “buy in” to an EAP unless they feel a sense of ownership of the program. So it’s important that the initial decision to establish an EAP is a mutual one, shared by management and employee representatives.

In an organized workplace, senior management and senior union or association representatives provide the mandate to proceed. In non-organized workplaces, the mandate should originate from senior management, in consultation with employee groups or representatives. (Non-organized workplaces should read “employee groups” when the term “union or association” appears in this document.)

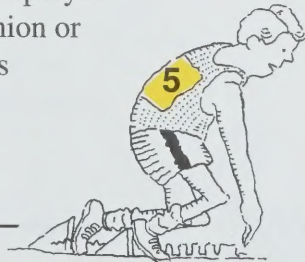
An EAP should start with an endorsement from management in the form of a corporate policy statement. This formalizes the process, and ensures the program will develop according to defined objectives, rather than in response to crises.

Helping troubled employees is a serious business. The success of your EAP depends to a great extent on how it is perceived by the workforce. And employees’ perceptions are shaped by the importance management and employee representatives place on creating and administering the EAP.

### 2. Establish a Joint Committee

Establish an EAP Committee that represents management and employees.

And ensure that the committee members are committed to helping fellow employees and to the EAP concept.





Your EAP committee is responsible for:

- drafting EAP policy and procedures
- overall program management
- promotion, education and training
- review and evaluation.

We recommend that your committee choose its own chairperson. This individual should be seen as non-partisan. He or she should be respected in the workplace, show leadership and be able to devote sufficient time to the EAP — to organize and lead meetings, and to delegate tasks.

Your committee should include a representative from your Human Resources Department. The employee benefits manager may be appropriate, since this person is most familiar with the extended health coverage offered at your worksite. If your workplace does not have a human resources department, then the manager who is most responsible for staffing concerns should be on the committee.

If your workplace is organized, the labor representatives on your committee must have the support of their union or association. They should be given a clear mandate to represent their local or plant.

Your EAP committee must be representative of different workplace groups — for example, your worksite's health and safety committee and occupational health services. It must also be efficient. Keep the group to a workable size. Most committees have six to eight members.

Finally, committee members should be willing to learn and to place program objectives above personal ambitions. Members should be given time during work hours to devote to their EAP Committee roles.

### 3. Share Ideas and Seek Feedback

It is important that committee members communicate with their co-workers about the EAP.



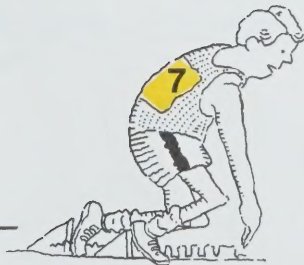


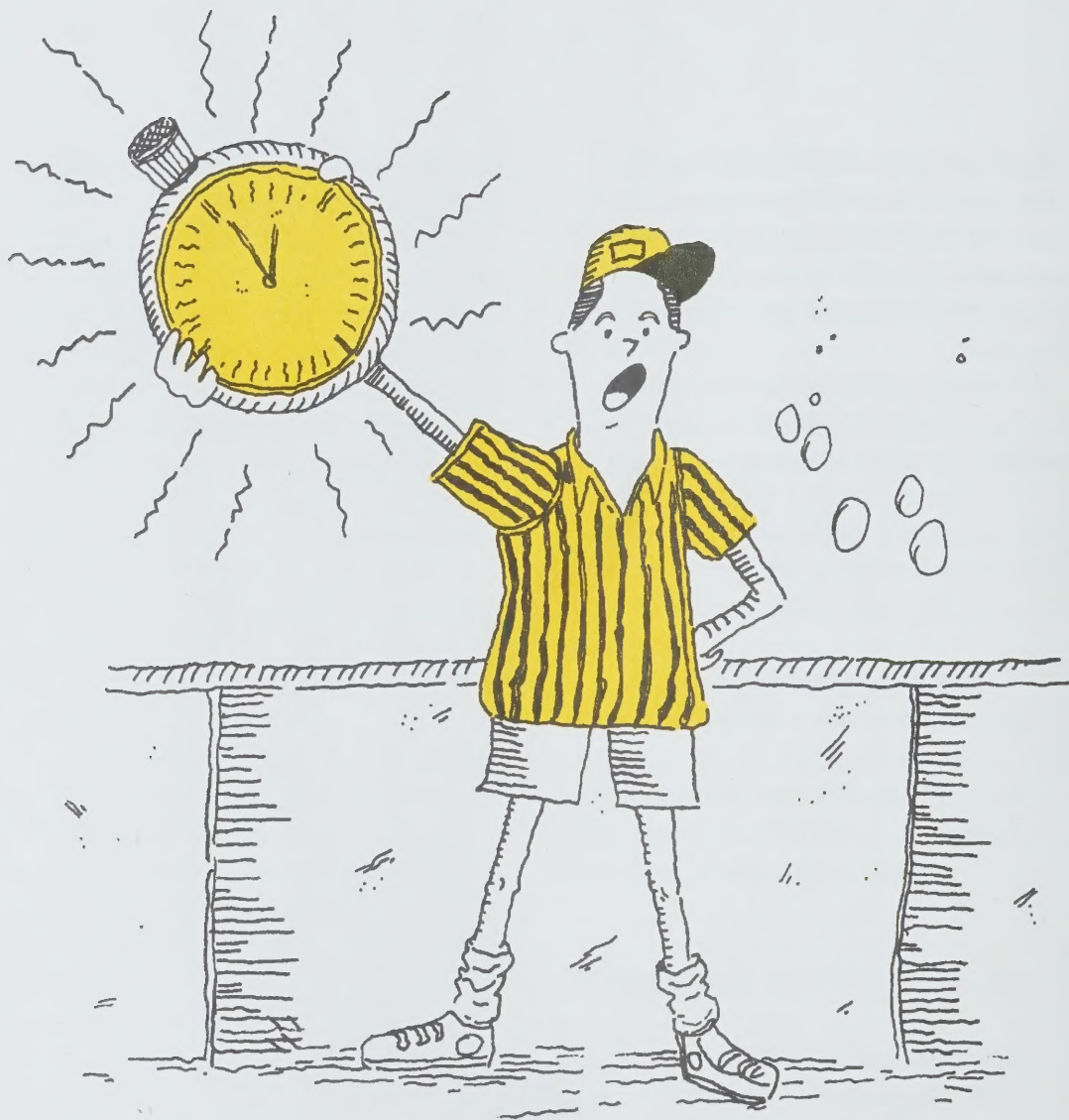
They can give fellow employees an overview of your program plans, discuss the reasons for its development and get feedback on new program ideas. They can also solicit support for the EAP.

An employee survey is a good way to identify the needs of staff — before you begin to develop your EAP.

By surveying employees, you can tailor your EAP to their needs.

You can also consider follow-up surveys to revise and update program content. Focus groups are another good way to determine employee needs and priorities (see *On Track: Guidelines to Creating an EAP* for more information on focus groups).





## Plan

### 4. Determine the Focus of Your EAP

EAPs come in different shapes and sizes. It's important to choose the most appropriate options to meet the needs of your workforce — given the resources available to you.

This chart lists six basic program categories, each with corresponding

options you should consider in developing your EAP. You need to select at least one option for each of the six categories. In some cases, you may want to combine several options within one category to meet the needs of your worksite. The ARF recommends that your program have as broad a focus as possible.

Category	Options		
Focus of Program	Substance Abuse	All Personal Problems	Comprehensive Health Promotion and Assistance
Program Access	Voluntary self referral	At suggestion of peer or supervisor	Formal referral by supervisor
Eligibility	Employees	Families	Retirees
Location of services	On-site	Off-site (single location)	Off-site (multiple locations)
Type of Staff	Volunteer (peers)	Professional (internal)	Professional (external)
Range of Services	Assessment/Referral	Short-term Counselling	Case management/Aftercare





Next, start to think about the different functions of your program and who will be responsible for them. Here's a checklist of some of the more common EAP functions.

*Organizational functions* include:

- Administration
- Communication
- Coordination
- Consultation
- Education
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Networking
- Skill Training

*Program functions* include:

- Assessment
- Referral
- Counselling
- Case Management
- Aftercare

## 5. Assess Resources

Take stock of the resources — both inside and outside your organization — that may be able to contribute

to your program.

Your local Addiction Research Foundation office can provide resource materials and advice.

Your local EAP Council can put you in touch with local resources, including other workplaces that have EAPs. Invite local experts to make presentations to your committee.

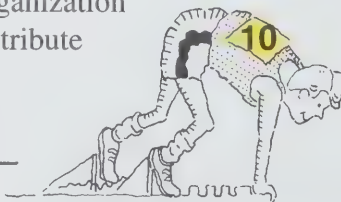
Contact similar worksites that have EAPs. Talk to program representatives about the kind of programs they offer and how they are working.

Contact your local community college or university — they may offer EAP courses or a certificate program.

Also, check your public library or University library for books, videos and other materials on Employee Assistance Programs.

Your local United Way may have a Labour Community Services Representative who can tell you about the Union Counsellor Program.

Your Community Information Centre has a direc-



tory of health, social services and multicultural organizations in your area.

The *Resource Directory to EAP*, available from the ARF, lists service providers in many communities.

Your work sector association may have a set of EAP guidelines.

At the same time, begin to assess the resources at your own workplace. Do you have professional counsellors or trainers on staff? Do you have volunteers interested in taking EAP training?

Of course, your budget will shape the type of program you can offer. You will have to work within a budget to decide, for example, whether you can purchase services (such as consultation, counselling or training) from an outside agency or insurance carrier.

Using internal resources may allow you to increase the services your EAP offers. But keep in mind that internal EAP providers — whether they are professionals or peer referral agents — must be seen by employees as credible and trustworthy.

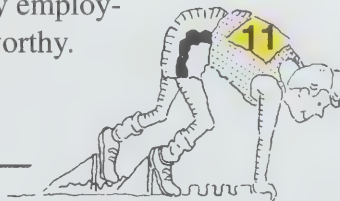
## 6. Develop a Formal Policy and Procedures

Your committee will need to develop an EAP policy statement describing:

- the principles and intent of the program
- employee and employer endorsement
- the range of problems to be covered
- program confidentiality
- how employees access your EAP
- benefits and job protection features
- program coordination
- promotion and awareness
- training for key personnel
- program evaluation.

A set of written procedures should accompany your policy statement, detailing how the program will operate. Written procedures answer the following questions:

- Who is eligible to use the EAP?
- How can eligible persons access EAP services?
- Who will fund the program?
- How will records be kept confidential?



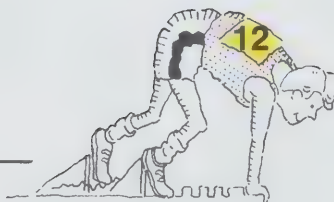
- Who will be responsible for coordination?
- What are the roles of key players in the workplace such as: employees, managers, supervisors, union/association representatives, peer referral agents, human resources staff, occupational health staff, multicultural representatives and external consultants?
- How will information be collected for monitoring the program?

Most EAPs are accessed voluntarily by employees. If your workplace wishes to provide formal management-initiated referrals as well, we recommend that you consider separate pathways for these two different meth-

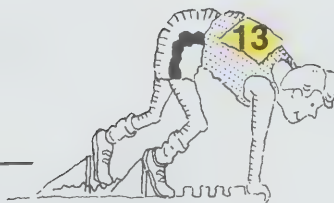
ods of referral. This will avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Both referral methods are effective, but they work best when separated. (If the two methods are combined, the employee may be reluctant to voluntarily seek help due to a perceived conflict of interest.)

## 7. Obtain Official Approval of Plans

Finally, your program recommendations should be presented for approval to both the senior management and employee representatives who originally gave your committee the mandate to proceed.









## 8. Launch and Promote Your EAP

Your plan has been approved and you're ready to launch your program.

First, make sure that all of the necessary components are in place and ready to go. Then follow these steps:

- train EAP staff and volunteers regarding their roles.
- have Senior management — and employee representatives if appropriate — announce and endorse the EAP in a message to staff.
- distribute pamphlets, posters and other materials to staff, detailing how to use the EAP (consider language needs of your staff). Include contact names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- tell employees who is eligible to use the program. If employees, family members and retirees are eligible, be sure to inform them.
- plan information sessions for all eligible employees, providing an opportunity for them to ask questions and clarify their knowledge of the program. These sessions are a

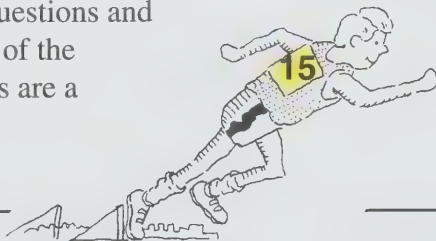
great time to introduce EAP staff and/or volunteers.

- place notices or posters at key locations in the workplace.
- publish articles about your EAP in the workplace newsletter — or other internal communication vehicle.

Ideally, your EAP has been developed with full support from both management and labor representatives. So, although you must be ready to “sell” your new program to staff, the concept of an EAP is already a known quantity.

You will need a promotional program that will formally notify employees and their families about the program and orient employees through written materials and information sessions. Put yourself in your employees' shoes. You need to answer these questions:

- What services are available?
  - Who can use the service?
  - Where is the service located?





- When can I use the EAP?
- Who is the helper? What are his or her qualifications?
- What languages are available?
- What steps does one take to contact the service provider?
- What is the cost?
- Who pays?
- What is the effect on my career if I use this program?
- What about confidentiality?

In explaining the program to employees, focus on its benefits and cover the important points of your policy; don't simply present them with a copy of the formalized policy.

If your organization has a public relations or creative department, ask them to assist with the promotional campaign. It may be valuable for a person from this department to join your EAP committee.

Some promotional devices to consider include letters to staff and their families, brochures, posters, telephone stickers, magnets, wallet cards, pay cheque

stuffers and articles in your organization's newsletter.

To identify your EAP, it helps to create a distinctive EAP logo that employees will recognize. Consider holding a contest in which you ask staff to come up with a name or a slogan that captures the spirit of your EAP. This will get employees involved in the launch, and give them a feeling of ownership of the EAP.

## 9. Educate Employees

Information sessions are an excellent way to inform employees about your new EAP. These sessions should cover the purpose, history and development of your EAP, and identify the key players. You should also outline:

- eligibility guidelines
- the types of problems covered
  - the kinds of services available
  - how the service is funded, including any cost to employees



- confidentiality and how it will be protected
- the difference between confidentiality and anonymity
- how to access the program
- the EAP referral process
- job protection features
- program neutrality with respect to employer/employee relations
- how the program is monitored and evaluated
- how to assist a co-worker.

When you develop an orientation session for your EAP you should ask yourself these questions:

- Have the purposes and objectives of the EAP been clearly specified?
- What information and materials will be presented, in what languages and in what sequence?
- How will you evaluate these sessions and how will that data be used to plan future sessions?
- Has adequate time been allotted for the sessions, including time for questions?
- What resources are

available to assist with this task?

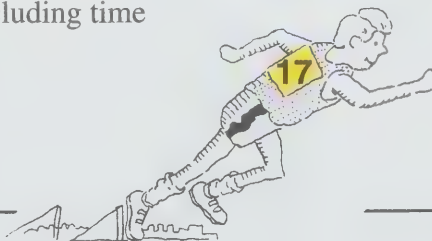
- What format is most appropriate?

Possible approaches include:

- lectures
- panel discussions
- demonstrations
- group discussion
- brainstorming session
- case studies
- role playing
- team teaching
- use of interpreters.

## 10. Train Key Staff

EAP education isn't just for the employee; it's also for supervisors, union or association representatives, and staff of health and safety committees and occupational health services. They must learn how to recognize a troubled employee, how to intervene and how to persuade or refer a troubled employee for assistance. (Don't assume they know how to



carry out these roles — they may feel reluctant to get involved. Training will make them more knowledgeable and comfortable.)

In addition, supervisors need to know how to monitor and document work performance problems.

We recommend that referral agents, Union Counsellors, and occupational health staff be trained *before* your EAP is launched and promoted. Supervisors and union or association representatives should receive their special training as soon after the launch as possible.

### *Thoughts on training and education:*

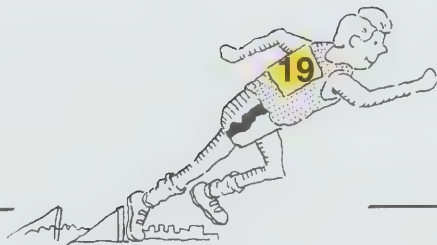
Regardless of their content, the best training and education programs always have four basic qualities: They are educative, social, fun, and challenging.

Remember, the success of your training and education programs has a direct bearing on the success of your new program. That's why EAP training and education should become a formal part of your organization's staff development system. Increased awareness of the program will mean that small problems are likely to be dealt with sooner — before they turn into crises.





# Notes





# Keep Going

## Prepare

### 11. Keep Your Program Visible

After its launch, your program will run for a while on the enthusiasm of committee members and awareness among employees.

But don't let your EAP run out of steam: maintain awareness through ongoing promotional activities. Make a long-term plan of how you will promote the EAP at your worksite.

Consider a series of articles or reports on EAP in your company newsletter. Feature a different topic in each one: alcohol abuse, for example. Also, you may want to hold an EAP Week once a year to heighten awareness.

Announce any changes or improvements you make to the program.

You may want to promote not only the EAP but also employee health. Consider addressing health issues such as fitness, nutrition, smoking cessation or stress management. Discuss possible

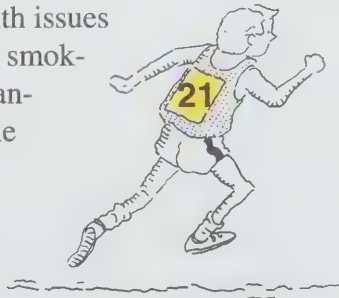
programs with your occupational health staff and members of your worksite health and safety committee.

If use of your EAP is low in some departments or employee groups (that is, below four per cent of employees per year) concentrate your promotion efforts there. If program use is even across the organization, then focus your promotional activities on all employees.

### 12. Collect Statistical Data

EAPs are not static. They must be responsive to the needs of the workplace. That's why you will need to monitor your program once it is in place. Your committee will need to determine what kinds of information you require to review your program, who needs to see it, how that information will be used, and how you will ensure the confidentiality of program users.

Specifically, your committee will need to monitor:



- the annual number of referrals to your EAP in terms of new referrals, repeats and continuing cases
- the types of problems for which employees use the program
- employee awareness of your EAP
- benefits derived from use of your EAP
- how users regard the services being provided.

### 13. Review and Evaluate

You will want to review your program regularly to see if it is meeting

its objectives.

Your evaluation can be simple or comprehensive. But the more effort you put into it, the more information you will obtain. This information will help keep your program up-to-date and responsive to employee needs. EAP committee members often gain valuable insights into organizational problems. These can benefit the organization and its employees.

By reviewing your program regularly, including data from your program monitoring system, you will be able to demonstrate to management and to employees how the program helps.





# Conclusion and Best Advice

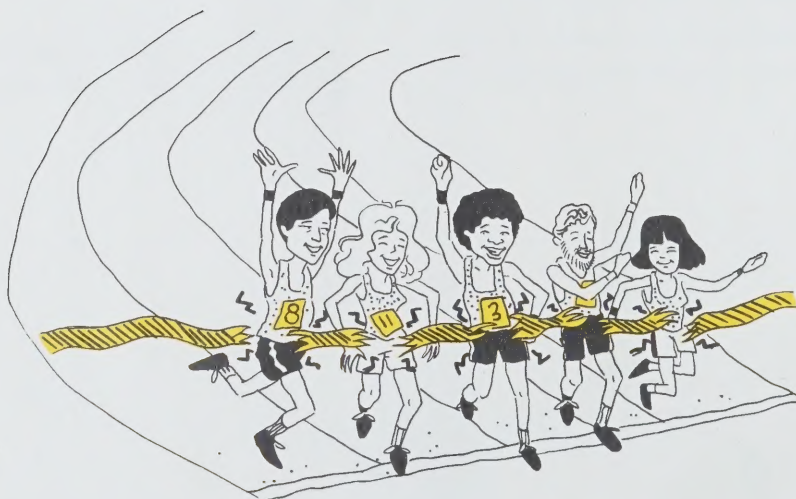
You've followed the 13 steps to creating an EAP that is tailored to your worksite and shares some common principles with other successful programs. We hope that the information provided in this manual has helped to shape a program that will benefit your workplace.

In conclusion — and for the record — here is our best advice on EAPs.

The Addiction Research Foundation recommends that an EAP:

- be developed jointly by the employer and employees
- have written policies and procedures
- address a broad range of problems
- encourage voluntary referrals
- provide for performance-related referrals, preferably through a parallel management intervention program
- be promoted to all employees and eligible family members
- be easily accessible to all employees and eligible family members
- deliver assistance off-site in the community.








The Addiction Research Foundation has provided advice and assistance on EAPs to worksites for more than 25 years. We offer a wide range of workplace information materials.

The **On Track** Series includes:

- An *Introduction* to Employee Assistance Programs
- An *Overview* of Employee Assistance Programs
- *Guidelines* to Creating an Employee Assistance Program



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